

An Introduction to the International Symposium “Re-examining Global Capitalism from the Perspective Afro-Japanese Relations: Land, Space and Modernity”

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This collection of papers is based on the symposium “Re-examining Global Capitalism from the Perspective Afro-Japanese Relations: Land, Space, Modernity,” held by Institute of Japan Studies and African Studies Center in Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, on January 29, 2018. It was very unfortunate that Prof. Carol Gluck, one of the key note speakers, was unable to participate in the symposium. However, we had five extraordinary presentations based on case studies and theoretical criticism: African Studies by Prof. Takeuchi, Columbian Studies by Prof. Hataya, South Asian Studies by Mr. Sato, Geographical Studies in Osaka, Japan, by Prof. Haraguchi, and a theoretical approach for criticism against global capitalism by Prof. Nakayama. It was a realized inter-disciplinary and exciting discussion. Prof. Gluck sent us a commendable video presentation, which was greatly appreciated. Prof. Sakai and Tomotsune were in charge of chairs and discussants then.

The idea of the symposium has its roots in Prof. Gluck's previous seminar, “Rethinking Modernity: Japan and World History,” which was held as the intensive winter session for post graduate course by Institute of Japan Studies, TUFs, on January 2017. In the seminar, beginning with arguments of modernization in Japan such as Marius Jansen during early 1960, historical and theoretical works such as Yoshimi Takeuchi, Yoshio Yasumaru, Arif Dirlik, we had dealt with various approaches for modernity based on the case studies of Japan, Ottoman empire, China and Africa. Not only these but also, *Bamako* (2006), a marvelous and deeply critical film by Abderrahmane Sissako, which problematizes notorious Structural Adjustment Programme in Africa conducted by IMF and World Bank during 1990s. Through the seminar, we experienced how it is important to question the global capitalism from the perspective of Africa and to understand modernity principally which has been swallowing people's aspirations for westernization or modernization and making them homogeneous but unequal world in Asia or Africa.

We should also notice the importance of the perspective of “land reform” in contemporary society as another root of the symposium, which is raised by Prof. Takeuchi and the works of African Studies Center in TUFs. In Sum, we tried to realize the following intellectual practice through the arguments above: re-learning principal criticism against modernity from the perspective of world-history and at the same time, letting the practice pass through the frontier works of area studies. This collaborative practice based on world-history and area studies turns to the critical engagement toward contemporary society to reconstitute the picture of the world keeping with tense reality and actuality. This international symposium would be regarded as one of the attempts to embody the idea.

This intellectual engagement is necessary for Japan studies, especially for history and area studies. The so-called Madagascar political crisis in 2009 could be raised as one of the good examples to understand why Afro-(East) Asian approach is essential. In this incident, Daewoo, a Korean international logistics company, entered into a lease contract with the Malagasy government. Under this usufruct agreement, Daewoo acquired almost half of Madagascar's national property for 99 years, for the purpose of producing corn for biofuel. Because of this outrageous contract, selling all national resources to a foreign private company, the regime was instantly overturned by a coup d'état. Although the case was triggered by an affiliated company of newly-risen zaibatsu in Korea, it is noticeable that the conventional custom of land reform or land development in Korea is formulated through the strong influence of Japanese colonialism. Historical “legacy” of colonialism would be boomeranged on some places in the world (Tomotsune, 2019).

In terms of the contemporary tendency of “land reform” issue, in addition to the rapid land development at the moment of 2020 Tokyo Olympics, we should also refer to the revised act of Agricultural Land Law enacted in 2009 in Japan, by which agricultural land can be used by private companies through a lease agreement with a maximum of 50 years. This measure intends to expand the separation of land owners from users. This manner of recent land development includes hazardous destruction of land by ignoring historical conditions or residents' lives (ibid.).

In this sense, it is indispensable to maintain the criticism against global capitalism with principal approach towards modernity to study contemporary Japan. We expect the papers collected in the symposium to be a clue to deepen these issues.

Finally, we honestly appreciate the presenters, discussants, and those who worked for editing and translation.

Reference

Tomotsune Tsutomu. 2019. “Making Heterogeneous Space: Land Development and the Proletarianization of Urban Underclass in Post War Japan,” *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, Volume 28. Issue 1.